

Article : WHY DOES THE POPE NEED BIG EARS?
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WHY DOES THE POPE NEED BIG EARS?

VATICAN INTELLIGENCE HAS SPIED ON RUSSIA FOR MANY YEARS.
ANDREY SOLDATOV

There is only one country in the world that denies having its own intelligence service - the Vatican. All highly placed Catholics, including the Pope, deny having even the slightest suspicion of espionage or connections of the Holy Throne with international intelligence. However, over the course of several centuries the traces of secret Vatican operations surfaced in one country or another. During the time of the current Pope, John Paul II, a record number of spy scandals have been noted. Vatican contacts, together with the CIA, conducted a large joint operation in 1982, secretly supporting the Polish "Solidarity", and by the end of the 1980's this had expanded into an almost daily exchange of information including even pictures from satellites. Information discovered in the archives of socialist countries regarding "moles" in the Vatican, pointed to more than one scandal in the early 1990's. In 1995 the Catholic clergy was accused of espionage - 2 Roman Catholic priests were expelled from Ukraine. Quite recently was the mysterious death of the head of the Papal Guard Estermann, who turned out to be an agent of the Stassi.

In all, the impression is created that even 20 years ago the Vatican turned into some kind of worldwide espionage center. While starting this research, I was first directed to Lubyanka. Who else should know something about this, if not our counter-intelligence service?

FOLLOWERS OF ARAMIS

"So, what the Catholics are doing now is called intelligence information collection", an officer of the Federal Security Service (FSB) revealed to me. "They were involved in this on the eve of the elections in December, and they were not afraid to direct their people during the last war in Grozny." His department colleague added: "Remember, the collapse of the Union began not in the Baltic region, but rather with western Ukraine. The Vatican took part in the creation of the Ukrainian national organization UNA-UNSO. It is the same that their warriors fought, and now are fighting against us

in Chechnya."

At the Service for External Intelligence (SVR), they spoke out more decisively. The Director of the SVR Press Service, Boris Labusov, commented: According to our information, there is no special structure in the Vatican involved in intelligence activities. Otherwise, we would know about it. However, the Holy Throne conducts the collection of information that is of interest to the Papal Government. This includes the aid of confidential sources. Besides this, activities continue to strengthen the position of Catholicism. All in all, it seems to me that the Vatican's intelligence activities are on the level of Russian intelligence in the 19th century. Then, if you remember, there was a very effective intelligence system in Russia, although the system of special services had not been built.

On the same subject, the thought that the Holy Throne is engaged in espionage is not at all new. It is not a secret, that time after time authorities of various countries expelled Catholic priests for espionage. After the war, a wave of arrests of highly-placed Catholics rolled across Europe: During 1948 in Hungary, Cardinal Mindszenty was arrested for intelligence activities; during 1951, in Romania - Bishop Shubert. During 1952 in Bulgaria, Bishop Bossilkov was even sentenced to death. However, it is impossible to say for certain why the Vatican directs its intelligence collection at this country or another. Clearly, the Holy Throne, differing from other governments that are forced to periodically give a public account of their activities, may permit itself to think strategically. The Vatican has 2000 years of experience demonstrating that patient people work there, clever people building plans for centuries. And who knows what they see for Russia in 2050, what the mysterious policies of the Vatican work out.

However, if the Pope has such wonderful intelligence activities then it must be called something. Let the Vatican itself completely deny its existence, but there must be some kind of evidence. In the end, even the United States acknowledged the existence of the secret organization NSA (the name of which is translated with wit as "No Such Agency"). And the first traces I discovered were in the memoirs of the former KGB worker Oleg Tumanov. In these memoirs he wrote in detail how, in the mid-1980s, upon the interception by Soviet Counter-Intelligence of a "microfilm with instructions of the NTS and the secret service of the Vatican", a worker of Radio Liberty gave evidence regarding Papal intelligence to the KGB. He spoke in great detail about this, and about the secret department of the so-called Russian Catholic seminar in Rome (having in mind "College of Russicum"), where, according to his data, religious figures were prepared for destructive activities in the territory of the USSR.

MYSTERIOUS "RUSSICUM"

This secret establishment, which now occupies an 18th-century building on Via Carlino Cattaneo in Rome, was founded by a declaration of Pope Pius XVI on 15 August 1929. "Gentlemen studying in this strange academic institution know that they could be sent to carry out dangerous tasks

abroad. In large auditoriums the recruits learn as much as possible about the USSR or the German Democratic Republic (GDR), Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Bulgaria. The participants not only study speaking in the languages, including the dialects, of the countries in which they specialize, but they also study intensively the history, economics, and real political problems of this country. The Vatican hardly is interested in military information, and little attention is paid to this aspect" - wrote the well-known Italian publicist Nino Lo Bello in 1982. This is a characteristic which would quickly resemble any kind of special service for the CIA.

Data that agents are prepared by the "Russicum" for infiltration into the USSR was confirmed in 1999 by the Italian "Association of Atheists and Agnostics" (UAAR). This same information was revealed by Schmidt-Eenbaum in the book "Intelligence Services of North America, Europe and Japan." Schmidt-Eenbaum is a well-known German expert in the field of special services, and the author of books about the spying activities of West Germany.

However there is evidence that "Russicum" is not limited only to the preparation of their own agents. At the Papal college even Russian Orthodox priests from Russian participate. At the Moscow Patriarchy it was revealed to us that currently there are no official students from the Russian Orthodox Church, however in the recent past this was not the case. Even now there are plans to send several people to study in Rome. Besides this, "Russicum" has a different approach to such students. It turns out that the college has an excellent database in which is contained the dossiers on the patriarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church. In the beginning of the 1990s, priests known to have been sent to study at "Russicum", described that their colleagues knew very well where they were born, where they were ordained, and in what parish the recently-arrived student was serving.

"CONSPIRATORIAL DEPARTMENT" OF THE VATICAN

It is no secret that a spying network cannot remain hidden without, let's say, a resident assigned to make contact with agents. Recalling that an undercover agent in the Vatican reported on the "Modesto Monastery in Milan", characterizing it as a "conspiratorial center for meetings between agents in the USSR and their Vatican handlers," Oleg Tumanov gave the key to one such center to all. For a long time we were unable to find any evidence of this secret "Modesto Monastery". Finally its trail was discovered in the memoirs of the Soviet dissident Yuri Glazov, who emigrated to the west in 1972. Having fled the Soviet Union, Yuri Glazov appeared in Italy, where he visited, it seems, all of the "special establishments" of the Vatican. In the end, Glazov ended up in that very monastery. It is true that this "monastery" turned out to be a Catholic school for "Russian Christians" in the suburbs of Milan Seriate. Here was established contact between Glazov and the CIA. It becomes clear from the Glazov's memoirs why, in the testimony of Tumanov, this Catholic school became the "Modesto Monastery." It turns out that its founder was the Catholic priest Petro

Modesto, who came to the USSR for the first time in the 1960s.

If I can be frank, I had no particular hope to discover fresh traces of Petro Modesto - after all, according to my calculations he must be no less than 75 years old. Then suddenly I stumbled upon a report that Modesto was not only alive, but he also displayed a surprising interest in the Yakut republic. In the last two years he visited this republic three times.

NON-DISINTERESTED ASSISTANCE

One shouldn't think that the agents of the Vatican arrive in foreign countries hiding behind an assumed name or jumping with a parachute. This is too difficult. It is more effective to use charity for these goals. For example the mysterious Jesuit Erbini, who was responsible for the Vatican's policies in Russia in the 1920s, attempted, albeit unsuccessfully, to carry out a remarkable deal during a famine in Povolzhya. "We'll give you assistance, you allow us to preach." This deft maneuver may have considerably strengthened the influence of Catholicism in the situation where Orthodox priests were being executed like rabbits. More to the point, I intentionally mentioned Erbini, because he practically established the previously mentioned "College Russicum" and became its first director.

The methods of Erbini are current and applicable. For example, for seven years in Russia the social organization "Charity Central" has existed. As was revealed to us, at the very core, this organization was fully created through the efforts of the Vatican and is under their control. It appears that "Charity Central", all in all, has a strategic significance to the Holy Throne. You see, as it became clear from discussions with their workers, the coordinator of the project on the papal side is no other than the archbishop Kondrusevich himself - the apostolic administrator of the Latin liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church of the European region of Russia.

However, of more interest to us is a different representative of the Vatican directing "Charity Central" - Secretary of the Council of Administrators, the Italian Stefano Kaprio. This young priest, born in 1960, has had a surprisingly successful career. Having just having been ordained, in October of 1989 he was sent to Moscow right away to the very important position as chaplain for the Italian embassy. In November of 1991, Kaprio participated in the establishment of the Theological College "Sv. Fomy Akvinskogo" in Moscow. And in 1993, the Apostolic administration ordered him to work for "Charity Central". Besides this, Kaprio serves in two Catholic parishes in the Russian province - in Nizhnii Novgorod and in Vladimir.

It seems that the key to his brilliant career was cut out in the establishment in which Kaprio received his education. Until his arrival in Russia Stefano Kaprio spent several years at "College Russikum", where it seems that this student is well remembered even to this day. (see: The interview with the director of the college Richard Temus.)

ESPIONAGE MECCA

Further searches for Papal espionage resulted in a unexpected result. It seems that in the 1980s the Vatican became a true Mecca for spies of all countries; a true capital of worldwide espionage. Even Pope John Paul II himself was involved in this. More apropos, to what height did he raise the cooperation between the Vatican and the CIA?

It is true that for more than 50 years American intelligence was a main partner of the Holy Throne. Their joint activities began during World War II when the Americans financed the creation of the secret Catholic service Pro Deo. In 1945, the future president of Italy Julio Adreotti became the secretary for this service's director, Andrew Morliona. Incidentally, in 1992, he confirmed the close ties between the Vatican and the CIA.

The evidence of modern operations by the Vatican and American intelligence has been seen in the Hungarian events in 1956, during Pinochet's rise to power in Chile, and in different "hot spots". However, the greatest attention was received by an operation agreed upon by Reagan and John Paul II, on 7 August 1982, when they agreed to support the Solidarity movement in Poland.

By the middle of the 1980s, the Vatican and Americans already exchanged intelligence information on an almost daily basis. From 1981 until 1988, the Director of the CIA Vernon Walters met privately 7 times with John Paul II. The list of interests of the CIA and the Vatican included the situation in Poland, Latvia, Central America and China, terrorism, Soviet nuclear weapons, and Soviet technological progress.

As a result, in the 1980s the Vatican was changed into a self-styled center for the conduct of secret operations against countries of the Eastern Block. This was well understood in the socialist countries. According to a number of intrusions into the Vatican by spies, the Holy Throne may be a leader in this area.

In 1990 Italian counter-intelligence received information that not only the Bulgarian special services and the KGB, but also the East German "Stasi" and Czechoslovakian intelligence were operating against the Holy Throne. Wiretaps were installed by the Italians who monitored the conversations specifically of the Catholic Prelate Cardinal Agostino Kazaroli, who from 1979-1991 occupied the post of Secretary of State for the Vatican.

In May of 1998, a report made its way through the press services that the commander of the Swiss Guard of the Vatican, Colonel Aloic Estermann, who was killed under strange circumstances, was an informant for the Stasi - the intelligence service of the GDR. The German newspaper Berliner Kurier reported that Estermann offered his services to the Stasi in 1979. After his posting to the Vatican service, he regularly relayed secret information to the East German service.

In the archives of Mitrokhin (a KGB major who fled to England with a packet of Top Secret documents) which were published in 1999, is recalled an agent of the KGB Miloslavskii, who was sent to the "Russicum" in 1973-1975.

Besides this, for several years the KGB investigated a highly-placed representative of the Vatican, Bishop Bukouski, who is close to Cardinal

Kazarol. In addition, until recently George Bukovski fulfilled the duties of Papal Nuncio in Russia. Quite recently he was recalled to Rome. We were told by the Papal Nuncioate in Russia that this is in no way connected with the espionage scandal, it was simply time for Bukovski to retire. However, an unnamed lady from the Nuncioate remembered, adding, that after the departure of Bukovski, the entire staff of the Vatican embassy was replaced.

INTERVIEW WITH THE RECTOR OF RUSSICUM

We were able to talk with the Rector of "Russicum", Richard Temus, in Rome.

Q: How does Russicum occupy itself now?

A: We are receiving students from the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Only priests, or those who are preparing to be ordained. After the Second Vatican Cathedral, Orthodox students began to come. Right now we have Orthodox students from Greece, Armenia, Poland and even now the United States.

Q: What do they study at Russicum?

A: Russicum is not an academic establishment. It is only a home where students live and spiritually improve themselves. They study in different places, for example, in the famous Papal western institute.

Q: Did Stefano Kaprio study here?

A: Stefano Kaprio only lived here and prepared to be ordained. He studied at the Papal western institute.

Q: How do you relate to the accusations that Russicum is a base for the preparation of agents dispatched to the countries of Eastern Europe?

A: Such rumors and accusations have circulated around us for so long that such a questions is not news to me. You see, during the time of Stalin our people simply did not understand what we studied. I can state officially that we have never had any type of "agent activity."

Q: How do you think, and why, did these rumors appear?

A: I think that when Russicum was established 70 years ago Pope Pius XI stated that the college exists to prepare people who must carry faith to the USSR, when faith would be totally destroyed there. Then you had the priests killed, and we thought that Christianity was dying in Russia. People who were preparing at Russicum must have been ready for the worst types of reports and information coming from Russia. Fortunately, this did not occur. For the authorities in the USSR, most likely this seemed like interference in internal affairs...